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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Senate Bill No. 213, An Act Concerning the Inheritance Rights of a Beneficiary or Survivor Who is Found Not Guilty of Murder or Manslaughter by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) fully supports Senate Bill No. 213 as it will close a loophole in the "slayer" statute that prevents a defendant from financially benefiting from the killing of another person when the defendant is a named beneficiary of the estate or life insurance policy of such deceased victim. Currently, a defendant found guilty of murder or manslaughter first degree is prohibited from inheriting any portion of the deceased victim's estate or life insurance proceeds. However, the statute does not prevent a defendant *acquitted by mental disease or defect* of murder or manslaughter first degree from such inheritance.

This issue was highlighted in 2012 when it was revealed that David Messenger, found not guilty by mental disease or defect, in the killing of his pregnant wife, stood to inherit over \$400,000 from his deceased wife's estate. The proposal will ensure that criminal acquittees are not unjustly enriched for the killing of another.

Finally, the OVA supports the inclusion of manslaughter second degree and manslaughter second degree with a firearm among the crimes that prohibit a defendant from benefiting from the estate. As the majority of cases are resolved through the plea bargain process, a defendant charged with manslaughter first degree that accepts a plea bargain for manslaughter second degree, would then avoid the prohibition and financially benefit from the crime.

I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report on Senate Bill No. 213. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.